

MAPLE, FIR, AND PINE: VERGIL'S WOODEN HORSE

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When Sinon first mentions the wooden horse he describes it as *trabibus contextus acernis* (2.112).¹ Earlier Aeneas, in describing the construction of the horse, had said *sectaque intexunt abiete costas* (2.16). Later on Sinon says that Calchas ordered the Greeks to build *hanc . . . immensam . . . molem / roboribus textis* (2.185-86). Next Aeneas reports that the Trojans said that Laocoön deserved his fate *sacrum qui cuspidē robur / laeserit* (2.230-31). Finally Aeneas says that *pineā furtim / laxat claustra Sinon* and the Greeks *cavo se robore promunt* (2.258-60).

Most critics, noting the apparent inconsistency, have followed Servius and explained that by naming different kinds of wood Vergil is employing the well-known poetic devices of *variatio* and/or *species pro genere* and means simply "wood."² Others have merely noted that different woods are named,³ one thought that this might be evidence "either of lack of revision or lack of special interest in carpentry,"⁴ and another has suggested that Vergil is following Homeric usage in varying

¹ All Vergilian citations without title are to the *Aeneid*. The following will be cited by authors' last names only: J. Conington and H. Nettleship, *The Works of Virgil, with a Commentary* 1-3 (London 1898⁵; reprint Hildesheim 1964); R. G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Secundus* (Oxford 1964); L. Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World* (Princeton 1971).

² Servius *ad* 2.112; elsewhere (*ad* 2.16) Servius offers one of his symbolic interpretations. See also: Conington-Nettleship *ad* 2.112, 557; A. Sidgwick, *P. Vergili Maronis Opera* 2 (Cambridge 1890) *ad* 2.16; T. E. Page, *The Aeneid of Virgil Books I-VI* (London 1894) *ad* 2.112; R. Sabbadini, *Virgilio Eneide* (Torino 1920) *ad* 2.112; C. E. Freeman, *Virgil Aeneid Books I to III* (Oxford 1924) *ad* 2.112; V. Ussani, *Virgilio Eneide Libro II* (Rome 1952) *ad* 16, 112.

³ C. G. Heyne and G. P. E. Wagner, *Publius Vergilius Maro* 2 (London and Leipzig 1832⁴) *ad* 2.112; J. Henry, *Aeneidea* 2 (London 1892; reprint New York 1972) *ad* 2.16.

⁴ R. D. Williams, *The Aeneid of Virgil Books 1-6* (London 1972) *ad* 2.16; Williams finds *abiete*, *acernis*, and *pineā* inconsistent, for as he points out, "the word *robur*, when used of the horse in 186, 230, 260, has the general sense of 'wood' rather than its special meaning 'oak.'"

the kinds of wood.⁵ Finally, a most remarkable explanation has been offered by R. G. Austin:⁶

We must remember that this is Sinon speaking: I suspect that *acernis* is a deliberate inaccuracy, a brilliant Virgilian touch to lend colour to Sinon's 'act' by a pretence of innocent ignorance—and the Trojans, knowing pinewood when they saw it, would feel superior to this simpleton.

The difficulty with this explanation is that it shares with the others the assumption that there is something inaccurate or inconsistent about the woods of the horse, especially when Sinon says *acernis*.⁷ So for Austin the horse is made of pinewood, and maple is almost too ingeniously explained away; however, Austin's solution for *acernis*, unlike those of the *variatio* and *species pro genere* school, suggests that there is typically Vergilian complex artistry at work here. Macrobius' Avienus thought so too:

Subiecit Avienus:
 . . . cum iam trabibus contextus *acernis*
 stare equus . . .
 scire vellem in equi fabricata casune an ex industria hoc genus ligni
 nominaverit? nam licet unum pro quolibet ligno ponere poeticae
 licentiae sit, solet tamen Vergilius temeritatem licentiae non amare,
 sed rationi certae in rerum vel nominum. . . . (*Sat.* 6.9.13)

How the learned interlocutors answered remains unknown, for the text of the remainder of the sixth book of the *Saturnalia* is not extant. But in the spirit of Avienus' remarks it will be argued here that Vergil was not indulging in any poetic license. On the contrary, if the woods of the horse are considered not as isolated epithets but as meaningful elements in their contexts, it becomes clear that Vergil, without being at all inconsistent, was carefully and subtly enhancing both the dramatic presentation and the poetic significance of his horse.

⁵ W. McLeod, "The Wooden Horse and Charon's Barque: Inconsistency in Virgil's 'Vivid Particularization,'" *Phoenix* 24 (1970) 144–49; McLeod adduces as a parallel Charon's barque (6.303, 410). Whether or not the colors of Charon's barque do constitute an inconsistency is questionable (145, note 2), but McLeod's solution is not convincing for other reasons. While it is true that "Latin is a precise tool, and Virgil . . . no unconscious craftsman" (146), it is not true that *robur* must mean "oak" (144–45) and, as will be demonstrated below, Vergil had his own poetic reasons for specifying the woods of the horse.

⁶ Austin *ad* 112.

⁷ Austin clearly perceived that *acernis* was the difficult issue; *ad* 186, 258, he explains *robur* as timber and *pineae* as "corresponding to" the *abiete* of 16.

The Woods of the Horse

1. *Robur*

It has already been noted that *robur* (2.186, 230, 260) is commonly used by Latin authors to mean wood with no specific reference to oak,⁸ and, therefore, is not necessarily inconsistent with the other woods named; moreover, *robur* regularly has such transferred and figurative meanings as firmness, strength, vigor, power, force and the best part or flower of something. Vergil's employment of *robur* follows normal Latin usage,⁹ but, as might be expected, he is well aware of the poetic possibilities inherent in its ambiguity. In using *robur* of the horse three times he fully exploits these possibilities.¹⁰

First, there is Sinon's bogus report of Calchas' orders:

hanc tamen immensam Calchas attollere molem
 roboribus textis caeloque educere iussit. (2.185–86)

Sinon not only stresses the size of the horse—he knows this aspect has already impressed the Trojans and neatly inserts Priam's own words, *molem hanc immanis* (2.150), into Calchas' alleged command—but also implies, with *roboribus*, what is naturally associated with both great size and priestly edicts, strength and power. Sinon has been carefully developing the idea that the horse is a powerful religious object capable of protecting those who possess it.¹¹ Playing on the Trojans' credulity and

⁸ Above, note 5; cf. Williams' remark (above, note 4).

⁹ *Robur* occurs 35 times in the Vergilian corpus. Excepting the 3 uses of the horse under discussion, the remaining 32 break down as follows. The clearly transferred or figurative usages account for 8 instances: G. 2.177, G. 3.235, *Ciris* 43; 2.639, 7.610, 8.518, 11.174, 11.368. Next are 7 instances that refer to wood, demonstrably not oak; G. 1.162 and 175 most likely refer to the woods of the plough as named (*ulmus* 170, *fagus* 173); G. 2.64 (*myrtus*), G. 2.305 (*olea silvestris*). At 4.399 the *robora* . . . *infabricata* which the Trojans in their haste do not wait to fashion into oars before sailing most probably are not oak since oak was not used for those parts of ships that came into contact with salt water (Casson 213, note 54). Theophrastus (*H.P.* 5.4.3) explains that oak rots in salt water. Thus Latinus' offer of twice ten ships *Italo* . . . *robore* (11.326) is best taken as Italian timber; finally, 12.783 (*oleaster*). Next are 7 instances that refer to wood which may be oak, but there is no compelling reason so to understand them: G. 2.25, 3.377, 420; 2.482; 5.681, 698 and 753 all refer to the wood of the smoldering ships of which the interior parts, particularly the frames (Casson 213), could be thought of as fashioned from oak. There are 6 instances where the wood is probably oak: 6.214, 8.221, 315, 10.479, 11.553, 893. Finally, there are 4 instances where *robur* means oak: trees, 6.181, 11.137, or the wood of an oak tree specified (*quercus*) in the text, G. 3.332 and 4.441. On the ambiguity of these latter two, see note 15 below.

¹⁰ J. Ferguson, "Book XII Revisited," *PVS* 7 (1967–68) 68, commented that "an ambiguity will generally be deliberate and that though one meaning may be primary, it is nearly always wrong to assert one to the exclusion of the other."

¹¹ Austin *ad* 112, 172, 188, 230, 232.

uncertainty, Sinon's suggestive *roboribus* helps to inspire that awe subsequently confirmed by the Laocoön episode.¹² There Vergil poetically signals the Trojans' fatal acceptance of the numinous power of the horse by having them adopt Sinon's very word: now they say Laocoön deserved his fate because of his attack on the *sacrum . . . robur* (2.230). Vergil also emphasizes the irony of their acceptance by having them cite Laocoön, who realistically assessed the possibilities of the horse and, while wary and suspicious, was clearly not in awe of any supernatural power it might have. The contrasting attitudes are underlined by the choice of vocabulary: the horse, now called *robur* by the Trojans, was to Laocoön simply *ligno*, "a piece of wood."¹³

In another sense the irony is compounded and dramatically intensified by the connotations of *robur*. The horse is indeed powerful in a much more active and vital sense than the Trojans understand. As Sinon, the reader, and, a typically Vergilian touch, Aeneas the narrator well know, the horse will soon demonstrate its latent power. With *robur*, a "lonely word" that moves in its suggestive spectrum from the inert wood of which the horse is made to the vigorous force which it unleashes upon Troy, Vergil has underlined what has been called "perhaps the most exciting ambiguity evident throughout the description" of the horse, that this apparently lifeless wooden object is really alive.¹⁴ Nowhere are the rich connotations of *robur* better exploited¹⁵ than in Aeneas' final, retrospective description of the horse at the moment its deadly force comes to life.¹⁶

¹² R. Heinze, *Virgils Epische Technik* (Leipzig and Berlin 1915³) 420, in discussing Vergil's technique of characterizing the audience by the speaker's words, observed, "Das Meisterstück in dieser Beziehung ist Sinons grosse Rede."

¹³ Austin *ad* 45; Austin saw the significance of *ligno* but not its contrast with *robur*.

¹⁴ M. C. J. Putnam, *The Poetry of the Aeneid* (Cambridge, Mass. 1965) 205; see also 6, and, on the horse's potential power for violent action, 1–41 *passim*. On the ambiguity of the "life" of the horse, see also B. M. W. Knox, "The Serpent and the Flame: The Imagery of the Second Book of the Aeneid," *AJP* 71 (1950) 384–85, note 12.

¹⁵ Vergil's exploitation of the ambiguity of *robur* is not confined to the horse episode. The *grave robur aratri* of G. 1.162 may be taken as describing the heavy wood of the plough but also surely implies the power and force of this principal weapon of the husbandman; thus Conington-Nettleship *ad loc.* compared 7.609–10, *ferri / robora*, the strength of iron. The *annoso . . . robore* of 4.441 describes both the timber or trunk full of years and the strength which is the result of years of the *validam . . . quercum*; again see Conington-Nettleship *ad loc.* Similarly, the power of Jupiter as well as the age of the trunk is suggested by *magna Iovis antiquo robore quercus* (G. 3.332). Finally, there is the *morsus / roboris* of 12.782–83 from which Aeneas is unable to extract his spear; here the wood (of the *oleaster*) is not only powerful, but like the horse is alive, as an active, biting adversary.

¹⁶ The metaphor of the pregnant horse is part of the tradition, as old at least as Greek tragedy; see R. G. Austin, "Virgil and the Wooden Horse," *JRS* 49 (1959) 17; Putnam (above, note 14) 14; Vergil repeats the metaphor at 6.516.

illos patefactus ad auras
reddit equus, laetique cavo se robore promunt. (2.259–60)

2. *Abies*, *Pineus* and *Acernus*

In a remark attributed to Nauck there is a simple solution to any supposed inconsistency about the woods of the horse: "Verschiedene Teile des Rosses sind von verschiedenem Holze."¹⁷ But Nauck's observation, while providing a pithy defense of Vergil against inconsistency, raises more interesting questions: why does Vergil name three kinds of wood and what effect does this have on the presentation of the horse?

It has long been recognized that when Vergil introduces his horse he has Aeneas describe its construction in the language of shipbuilding. The metaphor of the horse as a ship was traditional, but Vergil has made the analogy graphic with *aedificant . . . intexunt . . . costas* (2.16), *cavernas* (2.19).¹⁸ In Graeco-Roman antiquity ships were built with an exterior planking and an interior framework or ribbing,¹⁹ and this is clearly the picture given of the architecture of the horse: *sectaque intexunt abiete costas* (2.16), they cover the ribs (framework) with the cut fir (planking).²⁰

Later on Sinon says *trabibus contextus acernis* (2.112–13). Austin, just before he advanced his ingenious "deliberate inaccuracy" theory to explain *acernis*, recorded:²¹

¹⁷ T. Ladewig, *Vergils Gedichte* 2 (Berlin 1884) ad 2.112; Ussani (above, note 2) has the following comment on 2.112: "Lo Epperding [*sic*] si sforza di dimostrare che non v'è contrasto fra questo luogo e il v.16, perchè là sono espressamente menzionate le *costae*." Presumably, the reference is to F. Eggerding, *Vergils Aeneis* (Leipzig 1928), a work that has so far proven unavailable.

¹⁸ Cf. *curvam compagibus alvum* (2.51). See also Servius ad 2.16, 19; Austin ad 16, 19, 51, and 236 where he observes, "It is remarkable how often the vocabulary concerned with the Horse consists of terms applicable also to ships."

¹⁹ For *costae* meaning the framework, see Casson 221 and cf. Pers. 6.31, Plin. *H.N.* 13.63. The study of ancient wrecks has established that Graeco-Roman shipbuilding was "so refined that it resembles cabinet work more than carpentry" (Casson 202). The shipwright began with the outer shell of planking. The permanent framework was inserted later, either after the exterior shell was fairly complete or after the planking went only a certain distance up the sides. In the latter method, the rest of the exterior planking was put on with the framework already in place (Casson 204). Thus at 2.16, where they cover the framework with the planking, Vergil describes a known technique of ancient shipbuilding.

²⁰ Austin ad loc. noted, "Virgil first uses *intexere* in verse; for the transference from weaving to carpentry cf. Ennius, sc.65f. 'classis cita / textitur.'" Ennius' fragment also refers to building ships. On *texo* in shipbuilding, cf. Ov., *Her.* 16.12; Servius ad 2.16 (citing 11.326); R. Ellis, *A Commentary on Catullus* (Oxford 1876) ad 64.10; Vergil uses *texo* of the horse at 2.186. The force of the *in-* in the Vergilian compound is better taken in the sense of *super* or *ad* and the meaning of the verb thus approximating that of *vestire* or *obducere* (so *TLL* s.v. *intexo* II.2, citing 2.16), rather than as equal to *inter* (so Conington-Nettleship ad loc.).

²¹ Austin ad 112; Cooper apparently never published his suggestion, nor has anyone

Possibly the horse had an outer sheath of *abies* (softwood) and an inner frame of *acer* (hardwood), as Professor Gordon Cooper of Brisbane has suggested to me.

This suggestion of an outer sheath and an inner frame has the merit of being in accord with ancient naval architecture; moreover, it is supported by Vergil's careful use of *texo* and its compounds in his description of the horse. These verbs function both to preserve the horse as a ship metaphor,²² and to provide specific pictorial effects in their particular contexts.

At 2.185–86 Sinon says “hanc tamen immensam Calchas attollere molem / roboribus textis caeloque educere iussit.” Sinon, as already noted, is stressing the horse's size and power. Thus Vergil has him invite (*hanc* 183 . . . *hanc* 185) the Trojans, and the reader, to look at the whole horse. Therefore, its *materies* is spoken of generically, *roboribus* (albeit with ambiguities), and the fabrication of the wood is described with the simple form of the verb, *textis*;²³ attention is drawn to no specific details about the horse and its construction, for that would detract from the awe-inspiring effect of the apprehension of the entire monstrous structure.

With this the *sectaque intexunt abiete costas* of 2.16, as discussed above, may be contrasted, stressing here the use of the compound, *intexunt*, to depict precisely the detail of the construction, the covering of the framework with the specified fir planking.²⁴ Likewise, *trabibus contextus acernis* offers details about the wood and construction: now the horse has been joined together by maple beams; given the earlier description, an obvious inference is that this refers to the *costas* of 2.16, for the framework of a ship, or of any structure, may be thought of as that which joins or binds it together. This view is confirmed by parallel uses of *contexto* in passages about shipbuilding by two other authors:

Imperat militibus Caesar ut naves faciant, cuius generis eum superioribus annis usus Britanniae docuerat. Carinae ac prima statumina ex levi materia fiebant; reliquum corpus navium viminibus contextum corii integebatur. (Caes. *B.C.* 1.54.1)

dux Lemni puppes tenui contexere canna
ausus et inducto cratem defendere tergo. (Val Fl. 2.108–9)

In both Caesar and Valerius Flaccus *contexto* is used of the construction of the interior parts of the hulls. These interior structures (*reliquum corpus*, *cratem*) are then sheathed with hides. This parallels precisely the

noticed that it neatly complements Vergil's horse-ship metaphor. The suggestion of hard wood for frames receives support from the fact that oak, a hardwood, “was freely used for frames” (Casson 213).

²² For *texo* and *intexo* see above, note 20; for *contexto*, see below.

²³ Similarly, when Vergil writes of shipbuilding generally, he uses the simple form *texamus* (11.326).

²⁴ Austin *ad loc.* noted that the phrase *sectaque . . . costas* amplifies *aedificant*.

interior framework and exterior sheathing of conventional wooden ships. Thus by varying the preposition in the compound Vergil provides a complementary perspective of the design of his horse-ship.

Not only in form does Vergil depict the horse as a ship, but also in matter, for as he says elsewhere:

et casus abies visura marinos; (G. 2.68)

dant utile lignum
navigiis pinus. (G. 2.442-43)

In fact *abies* and *pinus*, fir and pine, were the primary woods used in Graeco-Roman shipbuilding.²⁵ Theophrastus says that most parts of ships are made of these woods (*H.P.* 5.7.1-3).²⁶ That these two *genera* of ever-green conifers were firmly associated with ships may also be illustrated by the way Latin poets use *abies* and *pinus* to mean a ship, or various parts of ships, by metonymy.²⁷ Modern underwater archaeology has confirmed that fir and pine were especially favored in shipbuilding and that, as might be expected, more than one kind of wood was used in building specific ships.²⁸ Thus the *secta abiete* with which the Greeks cover the ribs and the *pineae claustra* which Sinon opens are a skillful blend of the traditional horse-ship metaphor with the material realities of ancient shipbuilding.²⁹

Another traditional motif about the horse, dating at least from the *Iliupersis*, was that it was made of local wood from Mt. Ida.³⁰ The pine forests of Mt. Ida were famous in antiquity. Both *abies* and *pinus* flourished there and it was one of the relatively few places that produced wood suitable for shipbuilding (Thphr. *H.P.* 3.5.1, 3.9.1, 4.5.5).³¹ In

²⁵ Cf. *nautica pinus* (*E.* 4.38); *abietem in fabricandas naves* (Livy 28.45.18); *pinus . . . pinea texta* (Cat. 64.1, 10); Conington-Nettleship *ad* 2.16 noted that Vergil may have had Catullus' Argo in mind when describing the building of the horse. Recently, R. H. Thomas, "Catullus and the Polemics of Poetic Reference," *AJP* 103 (1982) 144-64, has proposed (160-61) that Vergil is influenced by the opening of Catullus 64 at 8.91-93. If this is the case, and Thomas's arguments are persuasive, then the surmise of Conington-Nettleship receives support.

²⁶ Theophrastus names *elatê* (*abies*), *peukê* and *pitys* (*pinus*), and *kedros* in his account. Cedar was particularly used in Syria and Phoenicia.

²⁷ *OLD* s.v. *abies* 4.b, c; *pinus* 2.a, b, c.

²⁸ Casson 212-13, with notes 51 and 52; for Vergil's choice of maple, see below.

²⁹ Vergil's horse-ship may also be partly indebted to Euripides. At *Tr.* 533 the horse is pine, *peukan* (the accusative in Diggle's text); then at 537-38 it is *naos . . . skaphos*, a ship. Conington *ad* 2.31 cited line 536 of this chorus as the inspiration for *innuptae*. For other echoes of this passage in Vergil's description of the horse, see L. Parmentier et H. Gregoire, *Euripide* 4 (Paris 1968) 50.

³⁰ Apollodorus, *Epitome* 5.14; Austin *ad* 15.

³¹ Cf. Ovid's description of the building of Paris' ships, *Her.* 16.7-12; Plin. *H.N.* 16.38-48, 195, 203.

addition, Mt. Ida was also a source of the relatively rare maple, and the maple that grew on mountains was used for timber (Thphr. *H.P.* 3.3.2, 3.11.2).³² Thus Vergil has produced what one critic called his "elaborate interweaving of motifs."³³ The traditional horse as a ship is combined with the traditional horse made of local wood from Mt. Ida; but it is through the specification of the woods in terms of the realities of shipbuilding and the *flora* of Mt. Ida³⁴ that the two motifs are united in one poetic tapestry. The result is the image of the horse as a ship made of maple, fir, and pine from Mt. Ida.

The Specified Woods and the Poetry of the *Aeneid*

That the poetry of the *Aeneid* is complex is well known. Vergil's vocabulary and imagery are often to be understood on several levels, both in their contexts and in relation to other passages in the poem.³⁵ The image of the horse as a ship made of maple, fir, and pine from Mt. Ida, like so much of the imagery of the second book,³⁶ is no exception. In addition to uniting the traditional motifs to create the image, the specified woods serve the dramatic presentation of the horse, and poetically endow the horse-ship with irony and ambiguity.

³² While maple is not attested specifically in shipbuilding, it is known that a wide variety of woods were used, "the choice most likely being determined by what was available locally" (Casson 212–13). Vergil, it must be remembered, is presenting a horse as a ship made of local wood, not a ship itself. For maple (*sphendamnus*) in a similar mountain habitat with fir (*elatê*), cf. Dicaearchus' description of Mt. Pelion, *Fr.* 60.2.

³³ B. Fenik, "Parallelism of Theme and Imagery in *Aeneid* II and IV," *AJP* 80 (1959) 1.

³⁴ It is impossible to be certain where Vergil acquired his knowledge of these woods, their habitat and use, but Theophrastus is a likely source. That the poet of the *Georgics* made use, at times, of Theophrastus was noticed in the eighteenth century by an English *poeta doctus*: P. Toynbee and L. Whibley, *Correspondence of Thomas Gray* 1 (Oxford 1935) 270. Modern scholarship has confirmed Theophrastus' influence, particularly on *Georgics* 2; see Conington-Nettleship *ad* G. 2.22, 30, 243, 347; T. E. Page, *P. Vergili Maronis Bucolica et Georgica* (London 1898) *ad* G. 2.9, 270; M. Mitsdorfer, "Vergils *Georgica* und Theophrast," *Philologus* 93 (1938) 449–75; L. P. Wilkinson, *The Georgics of Vergil* (Cambridge 1969) ch. 9, esp. 242ff. What has received less attention is that Vergil probably continued to use Theophrastus when writing the *Aeneid*, particularly, as might be expected, in dealing with flora and other natural phenomena. This has received some notice; e.g., Conington-Nettleship *ad* 7.10, 12.412, 417, 766; T. E. Page, *The Aeneid of Virgil Books VII–XII* (London 1900) *ad* 12.412; A. S. Pease, *Publi Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Quartus* (Cambridge, Mass. 1935) *ad* 445. The full extent of Theophrastus' influence on the *Aeneid* awaits systematic treatment. See below, note 39.

³⁵ See, e.g., V. Pöschl, *The Art of Vergil*, tr. G. Seligson (Ann Arbor 1962) esp. ch. 1; B. Otis, *Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry* (Oxford 1963) 69–96; Putnam (above, n. 14) *passim*; R. D. Williams, *Virgil, Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics* 1 (Oxford 1967) 25; J. W. Hunt, *Forms of Glory* (Carbondale 1973) esp. chs. 1, 3, 5.

³⁶ Knox and Putnam (above, n. 14); Fenik (above, n. 33); J. P. Poe, "Success and Failure in the Mission of Aeneas," *TAPA* 96 (1965) 321–36, esp. 328ff.

Sinon's *contextus acernis* is significant in the drama of the second book in that it functions partly to establish his credibility about the horse. As Austin noted, this is Sinon's first mention of the horse and he "points to the Horse, almost casually—is content to hint that there is something uncanny about it, and then quickly leaves the subject."³⁷ But within this brief, first allusion Vergil has had Sinon include *contextus acernis*. It has been pointed out that among the rhetorical devices Sinon employs is the working in of small details to lend credence to his story.³⁸ Thus Sinon's specifics in terms of material and construction are designed to impress upon the Trojans that, whatever is true of this strange horse, he has not only accurate but also intimate knowledge about it. It is no accident that the next mention of the horse in the episode is by Priam asking Sinon for detailed information about it (2.150–51).

On another level, it is not only ironic that the single horse-ship accomplished what *mille carinae* (2.198) could not, but even more so that it is made of timber from the Trojans' own sacred Mt. Ida. But the specified woods do more than compound the irony:

pineae silva mihi, multos dilecta per annos,
lucus in arce fuit summa, quo sacra ferebant,
nigranti picea trabibusque obscurus acernis. (9.85–87)

The speaker is Cybele describing the source of the wood she gave to Aeneas when he built his fleet on Mt. Ida.³⁹ The verbal and metrical correspondences between *trabibusque obscurus acernis* and *trabibus contextus acernis* (2.112) are obvious; moreover, *acernus* itself is a rare word.⁴⁰ Thus by choosing it Vergil does not simply reflect the reality of the *flora* of Mt. Ida, but also underlines with an unusual word what is

³⁷ Austin *ad* 112.

³⁸ J. Lynch, "Laocoön and Sinon: Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.40–198," *G & R* 27, no. 2 (1980) 174. Lynch specifically discusses Sinon's use of this technique to establish *confirmatio* in the earlier part of his speech (2.40–104).

³⁹ Against earlier critical reservations (e.g., Conington-Nettleship *ad loc.*) about the suitability and sense of this unusual episode, R. D. Williams, *The Aeneid of Virgil Books 7–12* (London 1973) *ad* 9.77–79, 85; further evidence of the finished nature of the passage may be deduced from the specified *nigranti picea*. Vergil's knowledge of the *flora* of Mt. Ida is again detailed and may derive from Theophrastus (above, note 34) who notes the blacker nature of the Idaean pine and its pitch (*H.P.* 3.9.2, 9.2.5). See also below, note 42.

⁴⁰ *Acernus* occurs only eleven times in classical poetry, and never in prose. It was introduced into published verse by Horace (*Sat.* 2.8.10). Vergil uses it only once more (8.178, the *solio acerno* of Evander), and never uses the noun, *acer*. The other seven instances are Prop. 4.2.59, 4.4.7; Ov. *AA* 1.325, *Fasti* 1.423, 3.359; *Met.* 4.487, 8.346. At *Ibis* 567 it is used of the Trojan horse but the text is uncertain. There are only three other known instances of *acernus*: in the *lemma* of Mart. 14.90; in late antiquity, Sidon. *Epist.* 1.5.4 and Ven. Fort. 3.9.23 (only here as a substantive). The variant *acerneus* occurs in Ven. Fort., *Carm. Praef.* 5 and *CIL* 14.2794.14.

clearly a repetition with "an obvious artistic purpose."⁴¹ Moreover, Cybele's lines do not merely recall, with *pineae* and *acernis*, the woods of the horse, but also its construction as a ship. This is accomplished in two ways: first, the whole context is about shipbuilding (9.80–89);⁴² second, the phrase specifically echoed, *trabibus contextus acernis*, describes the naval architecture of the horse.

Vergil has explicitly linked together the horse-ship and Aeneas' own fleet.⁴³ In the subtle, complex, and ambiguous world of Vergilian imagery, that which destroys Troy foreshadows that which preserves Aeneas and the remains of Troy and carries them to Italy for the Rome that is to be. Thus the horse, indeed a *monstrum infelix* (2.245) to Aeneas' hindsight, also speaks, through its woods of maple, fir, and pine, as a typically Vergilian *monstrum*, with another voice, evoking the essential dualism that pervades the *Aeneid*: it reminds us that "the seeds of Rome lie in the ashes of Troy."⁴⁴

⁴¹ J. Sparrow, *Half Lines and Repetitions in Virgil* (Oxford 1931) 60; for Vergil's unhomeric, conscious use of repetition, see 58ff., 70, 79–88, 110.

⁴² While *picea* was of limited use in carpentry (Plin. *H.N.* 16.42), its prime product, pitch (Vergil mentions the famous *pice* of Mt. Ida at *G.* 3.450 and *G.* 4.41) was extensively applied to hulls (Casson 211); as Casson notes, Vergil specifically refers to this practice at 4.398, *uncta carina*; it may be added that *uncta . . . abies* (8.91) is another example.

⁴³ Elsewhere Aeneas' ships, as the horse, are made of *abies* (5.663, 8.91) and *pinus* (5.153, 9.116, 10.230) from Mt. Ida (3.6, 10.230). Vergil's specification of *abiete*, *pineae* and *acernis* for the horse may be compared to his technique of "allusion to various flora . . . one more means whereby the poet is able to speak indirectly but succinctly to the attentive reader"; W. R. Nethercut, "Trees and Identity in Aeneid 8 and Bucolic 2," *Vergilius* 13 (1967) 16.

⁴⁴ Otis (above, note 35) 246; the horse has been noted as a *monstrum*, but only of destruction: Putnam (above, note 14) 7–8; G. K. Galinsky, "The Hercules-Cacus Episode in Aeneid VIII," *AJP* 87 (1966) 33, 47. For their valuable criticisms and suggestions thanks are due to the Association's anonymous referees, the editor of *TAPA*, and my colleagues Kathleen Morgan and Mary Kay Gamel. Thanks are also due to the Board of Literature and the Library of the University of California at Santa Cruz for their hospitality and assistance.